



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
6013 Lakeside Blvd.  
Indianapolis, IN 46278

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March 4, 2005

INDIANA BULLETIN NO. IN 120-5-1

SUBJECT: ADS - Communications from State and Area Offices with Field Office Staff

Purpose: To establish an approval process for communications with the field staff.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2005

This notice sets forth an approval process for formal correspondence and general communications between the field level and state office on requests for information, setting of deadlines, or any other request for information which requires employee's time.

This notice is not intended to prevent normal communications between a staff person at the state level with the field level in conducting normal business and follow-up activities that result from a request for assistance from the field, or in order to request additional information or clarification.

This notice will also set forth guidance for coordination between staffs in providing instructions or other information. These policies do not apply to the supervisor/employee relationship.

#### **Policy: Actions - General**

*All actions items, due dates, or deadlines sent to the field require the State Conservationist's approval and signature.*

1. The Leadership Team Member who heads the section responsible for the action item will approve by initialing any correspondence developed by their staff for the State Conservationist's signature.
2. Action dates are discussed and coordinated, when possible, at Leadership Team Monday morning teleconferences or Leadership Team meetings.
3. When #2 is not possible the Leadership Team Member responsible for taking the lead in developing the correspondence is also responsible for getting input and concurrence from other leadership team members who share the responsibility for developing the correspondence, or whose staffs will be responsible for fulfilling the request. This

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concurrence will be shown by their initials on the correspondence file copy for state office Leadership Team members or by copies of e-mails stating their concurrence for ASTC FO.

**Policy: National Office Requests to the field with Action Required, Due Dates, or Deadlines for response:**

1. Requests received in written form:

The Leadership Team member in charge of the staff responsible for gathering the information covered by the request will prepare a memo, or bulletin as appropriate, for the State Conservationist's signature. This correspondence will set deadlines for action as appropriate to assure that the information is provided to the state office in time to meet the national deadline. The National correspondence may be forwarded to the field with the state attachment (cover) or the state correspondence may just restate the national correspondence action. Actions/due dates will follow policy in Actions General.

2. Requests received in verbal form with urgent or very quick turn around times:

The Leadership Team member will communicate with the State Conservationist and/or other appropriate leadership team members and obtain concurrence on forwarding the request to the field. The appropriate ASTC-FO will be contacted prior to the verbal request being made to the field, unless the state conservationist determines that the urgency is too great or if the ASTC FO is not available for contact. In those cases the ASTC-FO will be notified of the contact after the fact.

3. Requests Received in verbal form that are emergency level:

The Leadership Team member receiving the request will respond as appropriate for the emergency.

**Policy: Other Communications**

1. Follow-up on Action Items

Staff responsible for receiving and compiling the requested information will inform the responsible Leadership Team member (section head) of any employees/offices who have not responded by the deadline. The Leadership Team member will determine the appropriate follow-up method. These methods may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Contact the responsible ASTC-FO for assistance in obtaining the information. This should be the preferred method where lack of cooperation occurs.
- b. Call the responsible office or employee directly.

## 2. Instruction

Instructions on how to perform a task or clarification that is provided as guidance for completing an approved task that was issued under the State Conservationist's signature, may be sent out under the appropriate Leadership Team member's signature.

## 3. Follow-up on action items: Reminders

Staff may develop written reminders of action item due dates to be sent out before deadlines. Reminders will go out under the Leadership Team member's concurrence.

## 4. Technical information which is to be maintained in the field or area office level.

The State Conservationist's signature is required on technical information that must be maintained at the Field Office level.

## 5. Information – General

General distribution of information can be sent out under staff signature following approval by the Leadership Team member for that section.

## 6. Information – General – As Requested

State and area staff members may respond to requests from the field for information pertaining to their area of expertise as appropriate. Field staff should direct their questions to the appropriate staff member listed in the "Who 'Ya Gonna Call List".

Sometimes information is provided where there is more than one staff responsible for the information. It can be confusing for field employees who may not know who is really responsible and who should be contacted. Each staff should be sure that a *coordinated* response is made, or that the request is forwarded to the appropriate person. Where these conditions exist, staff should be extremely careful to assure that the staff responsible gives the answer. It is very important that the appropriate person answer the question and that conflicting information is not provided.

## 7. Information – Special

We have many programs and special concerns which we want to share information, on which others want to be kept informed. This information may be on special events, recognitions, field days, and all kinds of important and special concerns. As much as possible these special concerns should be submitted to Partnership Today or some other information media.

## 8. Special Emphasis Program Information

- a. SEPM's should limit their information correspondences to one per week during special recognition months and one per month during other times of the year. If more frequent correspondence is needed, it will be approved by the ASTC Operations prior to being sent.
- b. Any requests for information or action from the field will require the State Conservationist's signature.

Again, I want to emphasize that this bulletin is to establish policies and guidelines for formal correspondences and general communication and not to limit needed communications in our daily efforts to perform our duties and responsibilities. If you have questions about how you should perform these duties, contact the Leadership Team member responsible for your activities.

/s/

JANE E. HARDISTY  
State Conservationist